174 /13/ This lack of certainty concerning the origins of the Mossi
141 should not prevent us from treating the anthropological question of the Mossi. On the contrary, for it is quite evident that, while linguistics can give us valuable information about the origins and affinities of the Mossi, anthropology can give us even more valuable and far-reaching information since, as we know, it is obviously easier for a people to change its language than the form of its skull. Let us, therefore, look to anthropology and consult Dr. Ruelle to find out what the Mossi are from a somatic viewpoint.

149 Dr. Ruelle, in the work cited below (1), has worked with 100
[18]

1. L'Anthropologie, Vol. XV (1904), pp. 519-561 and 657-703.

Mossi men (unfortunately, he did not measure women, which is a regrettable shortcoming and can invalidate certain averages, for instance, the ones concerning stature). From the viewpoint of skin color, which he generally finds dark brown (not only for the Mossi but for the other tribes of the IInd military territory which he studied at the same time as the Mossi), he gives for the Mossi the following numbers on Broca's chromatic scale:

70 Mossi out of 100 have no. 42
14 Mossi out of 100 have no. 41
19 Mossi out of 100 have no. 37 (2)
[519]

2. Page 522.

For the horizontal cephalic index:

2 Mossi have 65
4 Mossi have 68
4 Mossi have 69
2 Mossi have 70
3 Mossi have 71
13 Mossi have 72
17 Mossi have 73
5 Mossi have 74
15 Mossi have 75
11 Mossi have 76
7 Mossi have 77
8 Mossi have 78
6 Mossi have 79
1 Mossi has 80
2 Mossi have 81 (3)

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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based on kinship." He contrasts the Geselschaft feudal system with the tribal Gemeinschaft, and recognizes the possible transition from Gemeinschaft relationships to Geselschaft relationships in the evolution of culture. However, this admission places Coulborn on the horns of a dilemma as he does not accept feudalism as a step in the evolution of the state, but as a form of government that develops after the breakdown of a state and is used for state restoration. He states that "The place of feudalism in the rise of civilized societies is not yet complete, but we must pause to notice the profound importance of the substitution of something different for kinship relations."[13] We see from the Mossi data that they used kin bonds instead of warrior-band bonds as the basis for delimiting the persons chosen for government. The warrior-band members were rewarded with hereditary administrative positions. It must be emphasized, however, that despite kinship bonds, it was the loyalty of a man that determined whether his heirs received his fief.... These new vassals were required to renew pledges of allegiance to a ruler sometimes very remotely related. It must be borne in mind that kinship does play a part in political systems that range from feudalism to twentieth century Western democracy.

We cannot fail to observe that it was in regard to the society of the Chou period in China, one similar to that of the Mossi, that Coulborn was compelled to withhold judgment as to the nature of its political system. Shang society seemed to have had many of the tribal characteristics of the people found in the pre-Mossi Voltaic area. Chou had to face the problems of ancestor veneration associated with the tribal lands, and used some of the same techniques as the Mossi. Coulborn found many of these features "foreign to a tribal society" and finally decided to "leave open the decision as to whether Chou China developed a feudal system or a system of city states as its first enduring polity."[14]

In conclusion I shall say that the political system of the Mossi had definite feudal characteristics. These feudal characteristics did not come as a result of the breakdown of a pre-existing state, but served as techniques for building a state from small scattered groups. I should certainly like to keep open the whole question of feudalism, especially as it applies to the question of the origin of the pristine state, until more comparative data from Africa can shed additional light on this important subject.

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8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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large Catholic population. I am indebted to Conrad Arensberg, Joseph Greenberg, Marvin Harris, and Ben Zimmermann for many helpful suggestions. 114

[2] Tauxier (1912:792) reports that when he visited Pirigui village, situated to the north of Ouagadougou, he was surprised to discover that almost half of the nobles were Moslems. It is highly probably that here, also, were the descendants of a son of Sagha who replaced a dissident chief.

[3] These figures are only approximate since many thousands of persons are unreported. Again, many persons listed as Moslems are pagans who have taken Moslem names for ritual purposes.

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9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

with the Moro Naba and his chiefs. The Mossi commoner who became Minister of the Interior in the Mendes-France government received the treatment fitting to his rank from French officials in Africa, but he bowed humbly and paid homage to the Moro Naba when he visited Wagadougou. In return he still receives political support from the traditional Mossi hierarchy. Whether or not this man and the other Mossi politicians of commoner origin will continue to honor and respect the chiefs in order to obtain their support is not known. It is possible that this situation will change if the growing number of urban Mossi and some of their rural fellows attack the position of the chiefs. But for the foreseeable future it appears as though the traditional dynasty will remain in power, and may even extend its power at the expense of the other non-Mossi groups who are now members of the Voltaic Republic.

The apparent success of the ancient political dynasty of the Mossi people to adapt itself to the requirements of the modern world shows the ability of African institutions to adjust novelty with tradition. It confirms what the anthropologists have always known, that Africa was not a *tabla rasa* on which conquerors could easily impose their ideas and institutions. The cultures of Africa were meaningful to its peoples and when they could not be maintained, they were reinterpreted to meet new situations.[9] It is quite true that because of historical reasons the Mossi did not come into as intensive contact with Europeans as did their neighbors to the south, and that this is possibly why their institutions have persisted. However, the experience of Ghana should make us pause before accepting such a facile answer. A British type of Parliamentary system was imposed upon that country, but it is changing so rapidly that one wonders whether it should have been imposed in the first place. It is still too early to tell what the Ghanaian and other modern African governments will look like; but one might speculate that within the bounds set by the exigencies of the modern world, these governments may resemble the traditional African ones much more than those of their ephemeral conquerors.

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1. According to C. K. Meek, among the Jukun "The King's demise was and is kept a close secret, and is not, in fact revealed until some months afterwards, when the body is formally buried. Various reasons are assigned for this secrecy, such as that

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the counsellors may have time to choose a successor, that bloody contests between aspirants for the throne may be avoided, or that the royal slaves and wives may not run off." (*A Sudanese Kingdom*, C. K. Meek. London, 1931), p. 166. Among the Banyoro of Uganda, "When the King died, it was not made known for some days and only those in attendance knew that death had taken place, that, as they said, "Kutura," he "slept." (p. 21). And although there was some understanding as to who should be chief there was fighting between the different princes. "The fighting among princes might last only a few days while sometimes it would go on for weeks and even months." (p. 124) (*The Bakitara of Banyoro*. John Roscoe. Cambridge University Press, 1923). Among the BaVenda, "None of the people are informed of the death of the chief, but when some months have passed and the people begin to grow restless they are told that he has gone away; often a year or more used to elapse between the death of the chief and any recognition of it . . . It appears that during the interregnum any excitement or attempts at usurpation of power have time to work themselves out before the heir is installed; Everybody has a shrewd idea as to the true state of affairs, although no one dares to speak of it." *The BaVenda*, Hugh A. Stayt, London, 1931), p. 207.

2. "The Kingdom of Ankole in Uganda," by K. Oberg, pp. 157-158, in *African Political Systems*, edited by M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Oxford Press, 1940.
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7. Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.* p. 177.
8. *L'Afrique Francaise*. Vol. 66, 1957, p. 21, Paris.
9. *Man and His Works*, Melville J. Herskovits, New York, 1950, p. 542 ff, and Joseph H. Greenberg, "The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, Vol. X, 1946.

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4. The importance of sibling-in-law joking as a means of regulating conflict in the Mossi marriage relationship is further substantiated by the results of comparative research conducted among the Mossi resettled at the Office du Niger in the neighboring Republic of Mali.

The Mossi, who were first forcibly and later voluntarily resettled in Mali, were allocated farm land as elementary family units without regard for their extended kinship affiliations. Thus a man often found himself living in unaccustomed "isolation," in the company only of his wife or wives and children, and otherwise surrounded by total strangers. Although the potential for conflict in the marriage relationship remained high, or was even augmented by the stresses of adjusting to a changed milieu, sibling-in-law joking, the institution through which such tension is traditionally regulated among the Mossi, was no longer operative. Unless the younger siblings of each spouse had accompanied them to the resettlement area, those individuals were absent to whom they might have communicated their grievances and expressed their aggressive sentiments in a socially harmless, psychologically satisfactory, and culturally acceptable way.

As the traditionally sanctioned means of dealing with tension resulting from marital conflict was no longer available to the Mossi resettled in Mali, there occurred an increase in the incidence both of violence in marital disputes and of separation and divorce.

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stock against marauding beasts and thieves. All caravaneers had to pay a tax to the local chiefs to cross their borders or to stop in their markets to trade. Binger reported that the caravans which passed through the market center of Wagadougou had to give the Moro Naba a share of their merchandise, aside from the presents which they gave to him. He also reported that the horse traders from the Yatenga, in the north of Mossi country, and the Hausa caravaneers, were sometimes forced to sell part of their wares to the Moro Naba at one-hundredth the purchase price (Binger 1892 : II, 292–300). Not all the caravaneers submitted to extortion, however, and at one period many of them traded with Mane instead of passing through Wagadougou where the tariffs were too high. On the other hand, the Mossi chiefs did not tolerate any trespassing on their territories by caravans that did not pay taxes. Those who tried to avoid doing so were subjected to attack by the mounted nobles *(nakomce)* on behalf of the district chiefs. Wise caravan leaders not only paid their taxes but established close relationships with the chiefs in order to receive adequate protection from some nobles who illegally attacked and looted the caravans.

It is impossible to know the actual volume of caravan trade which passed through Mossi country, but we can get a fairly good idea of it by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.[9] For 1901 and 1903 the official figures were:

TABLE 28A
Mossi Trade (1901–3)

Year	*Horses*	*Cattle*	*Sheep and Goats*	*Loaded Donkeys*	*Bales of Cotton Cloth*
1901	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903	196	6,624	30,892	4,294	369

Lucien Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade for 1904 and 1905, guessed that about 16,000 cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the customs post in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believed that since

> ... the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one can estimate at least an annual export of 20,000 cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons. (Marc 1909 : 178)

(9) Great Britain Parliamentary Papers: Cd. 788–27, no. 357, Northern territories of Gold Coast, report of 1901 in Acc. and Papers, vol. LXIV 1902. Cd. 2238–6, no. 429, N.Ts of Gold Coast, report of 1903 in Acc. and Papers, 1904, and 1906, vol. LI.

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175 366 437 54 their own commercial centers, they acted quite differently outside their country. Dubois reports that at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasure" with the freest morals in the Sudan, the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding and Touat spent a great deal of money in pleasure and in gifts to the beautiful women, but the "Mossi did not waste their money and left as soon as they had finished their affairs" (Dubois 1899 : 292–300).

175 437 439 648 The days of the caravans are now over in Mossi country, even though large groups of traders carry on the traditional commerce in livestock, cotton, kola nuts, some dried fish, and salt. As soon as the French conquered th country they formulated plants to control the caravans. One of the earliest reports, for June 1899, reads:

> The country is calm and direct administration was established at Koupela, Mane, Yake... The Mossi trade is mainly with the English colony of the Gold Coast. It consists mainly of livestock, very plentiful in Mossi country, which is exchanged for merchandise from England; copper and material goods... Our task will be to discover the materials of the northern Ivory Coast which could be exchanged for cattle, and when this information is forthcoming we should be able to direct the caravans quite easily to the Ivory Coast. At the same time the English will see their provisions of cattle and sheep diminish. They will flood us less with their cotton cloth, with their glass beads, and with their kola nuts. In their place, the products of French manufacture can arrive to us through the Ivory Coast after being exchanged for the products of our colony there.[8]

439 117 464 These plans did not succeed. The Mossi still export a great deal of their products towards the forest zones of Ghana, including their "numerous laborers" which, according to Beauminy writing in 1919, were "the principal riches actually utilizable in Mossi country". (Beauminy 1919 : 71–78). The migrants themselves are, in a sense, the greatest traders in contemporary Mossi society.

PRESENT-DAY TRADE

439 [441] [472] [178] [113] There is a constant flow of goods between Mossi country and the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Much of the trade to the former region is in the hands of the large commercial companies and as such is beyond the purview of this paper. What is of interest here is the trade which is conducted by the ordinary people. A great deal of this trade is highly unorganized and the result of one or two men, or as many as five men, joining together to trade goods to and from Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The types of goods sent down to these two areas are the same as those traded in pre-European times.

(8) Unpublished document in the archives of *Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, Wagadougou, Voltaic Republic.

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